

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 12, 2020

The Honorable José E. Serrano  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
H-310 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert. B. Aderholt  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,  
Science, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
H-310 U.S. Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Serrano and Ranking Member Aderholt:

We are writing regarding the scope of the suicide epidemic among New York Police Department (NYPD) officers in New York City, and urge you to include increased funding for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (Byrne JAG) Program and the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) programs in the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies appropriations bill. Specifically, we urge you to include robust funding for Law Enforcement Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) grants for Fiscal Year 2021 to support law enforcement in accessing the mental health resources they need.

LEMHWA grants support the delivery and access to wellness services for those who need it most. Post-traumatic stress (PTS) and depression rates among our first responders can be as much as 5 times higher than the rates within the civilian population. We've seen the tragic reality of the 20 deaths by suicide per day statistic in our nation's veteran community, and we refuse to allow our NYPD officers to get to that point. Sadly, the heartbreaking 10 NYPD officer suicides in 2019, along with the most recent death of a veteran NYPD detective in Queens this year, indicate that more must be done. By recommitting the federal government's investment in peer support implementation projects and law enforcement officers' mental wellbeing, we reaffirm our commitment to protect those who protect us.

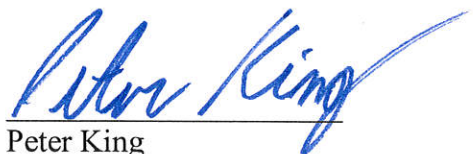
It is clear that law enforcement agencies like the NYPD need our support—the Office of the Inspector General of the NYPD stated in a September 2019 report that their office of Mental Health and Wellness can use more staff. Furthermore, the report indicates that even third-party resources like Police Organization Providing Peer Assistance (POPPA), through no fault of their own, are unable to provide officers with enough help. LEMHWA grants could help fill in these resource gaps. We applaud the recent public-private partnership the NYPD is undertaking with New York-Presbyterian medical centers, but while data has yet to be collected on its efficacy, we must fight this battle on all fronts.

Acquiring the appropriate support for our nation's law enforcement officers is no small task—but it is one that we can accomplish. We urge you to consider any and all measures to bring mental health care equity to our first responders, and to specifically do so by including robust funding for LEMHWA grants, and increasing funding for all Byrne JAG and COPS programs in your final appropriations bill. Our officers put their lives on the line every single day for our protection—it's time that we have their backs.

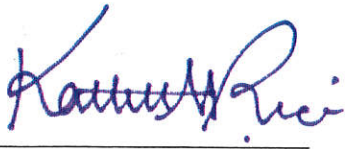
Sincerely,



Max Rose  
Member of Congress



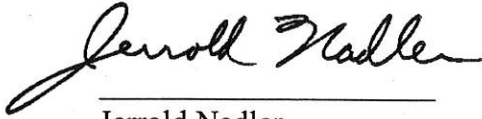
Peter King  
Member of Congress



Kathleen M. Rice  
Member of Congress



Lee Zeldin  
Member of Congress



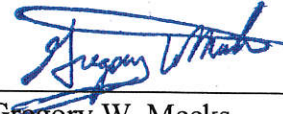
Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress



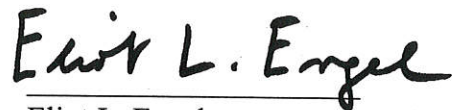
Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress



Hakeem Jeffries  
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel  
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress